Notice of Proposed Action

Moonlight Aquatic Organism Passage Project

Mt. Hough Ranger District
Plumas National Forest
Plumas County, California

Figure 1. Hungry 1 aquatic organism passage outlet showing evidence of flood scour and no clear passage (Photo credit USDA Forest Service)

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Introduction

We, (the USDA Forest Service, Plumas National Forest, Mt. Hough Ranger District) are proposing the Moonlight Aquatic Organism Passage Project. The purpose of the Moonlight Aquatic Organism Passage Project is to restore natural stream flow and aquatic ecosystem processes in the watershed. We encourage interested persons, state and local governments, and tribes to participate now and throughout the development of this project. See the project cover letter for details about how you can comment on this project.

Project Location

The project is located in the Moonlight Fire area in the northwest corner of the Mt. Hough Ranger District. The proposed activities are located in sections 16 and 17of T26N R12E and sections 24, 25, and 35 of T27N, R11E Mount Diablo Base Meridian (MDBM). Figure 6 shows the general vicinity of the project area and figure 7 shows the locations of the proposed activities.

Purpose and Need for Action

- Mitigate the effects of the wildfires on the perennial and intermittent stream courses within the Moonlight Fire perimeter.
- Improve aquatic connectivity, aquatic organism passage, access to high quality spawning habitat and thermal refugia, and recruitment into Indian Creek and the main stem of the East Branch North Fork Feather River.

Once the degraded conditions resulting from the wildfire improve, salmonids and recreational cold water fish should reoccupy the Moonlight Fire area.

Project Objectives

- Mitigate the effects of the Moonlight Fire on perennial and intermittent stream courses within the fire perimeter; including stream and water quality degradation, and increased sedimentation.
- Maintain and restore the hydrologic connectivity of streams, meadows, wetlands, and other special aquatic features impacted by the Moonlight Fire by correcting drainage on roads and trails that are disrupting natural surface and subsurface water flow.
- Create aquatic organism passages upstream and downstream of the Moonlight Fire perimeter; accessing high quality, cold water refugia habitat.
- Provide access within the watersheds to refugia from the main stems of streams affected by the wildfire but outside of the fire footprint.
- Design the aquatic organism passages to simulate the natural stream course through road-stream crossings.
- Design culverts and other stream crossings to maintain upstream and downstream passage and to prevent additional resource damage.
- Stabilize and re-vegetate natural banks with native vegetation, as well as reconstruct aquatic organism passage banks to reduce erosional processes caused by the Moonlight Fire.
- Reconstruct crossings at risk of failure and with the potential to wash out the road.

Proposed Action

Our proposed action includes replacing five aquatic organism passages in the Moonlight Fire area. We identified these priority aquatic organism passages for improvement and upgrade because of undersized, perched, steep culverts creating high stream flow velocity and leap barriers for aquatic species (figure 2 through figure 5). In addition, the undersized culverts reduce flow capacity, aggrading Hungry and Taylor Creeks upstream of the culverts inlets, and scouring the outlets; exacerbating downstream erosion, incision, and sedimentation. Over time, this may also jeopardize the integrity of National Forest System roads.

The proposed activities are compatible with objectives for aggregate surface maintenance level three National Forest System roads 27N09 (Hungry Creek Road) and 27N45 (Taylor Creek Road), which will continue to be maintained for public and administrative uses. Based on maintenance prescription guidelines "to keep drainage facilities functional and prevent unacceptable damage" these roads and aquatic organism passage improvements will benefit the drainage functionality of the road.

Hungry 1

This aquatic organism passage project is located near MP 4.9 of Antelope Road (29N43) in Taylorsville. The existing corrugated metal pipe would be replaced with a corrugated metal bottomless arch approximately 30 feet wide and approximately 80 feet long on concrete footings. This passage would include work about 150 feet upstream and 200 feet downstream of the inlet and 100 feet on each side of the stream both upstream and downstream. Ground vegetation would be removed during the course of work, and disturbed areas would be revegetated with native species.

Figure 2. Hungry 1, aquatic organism passage inlet

Hungry 2

This aquatic organism passage is located near MP 1.1 on 27N09. The existing corrugated metal pipe would be replaced with a corrugated metal bottomless arch greater approximately 30 feet wide and approximately 75 feet long on concrete footings. This work would also include decommissioning approximately 100 feet of an unauthorized road adjacent to the culvert and improving roadway drainage to reduce sediment loading.

Work would take place approximately 200 feet upstream and downstream of the inlet and, 100 feet on the south side of the stream both upstream and downstream. The area of disturbance north of the stream would extend approximately 400 feet north of the stream along the 27N09 road. Ground disturbing activities would include removal of existing ground vegetation and decommissioning the unauthorized road that lies within the floodplain. Road decommissioning would consist of constructing an earthen or boulder barricade, and loosening surface soils and reseeding. Disturbed areas would be revegetated following implementation. Road work would include blading and reshaping to improve drainage and reduce sediment transport on road 27N09.

Figure 3. Hungry 2 outlet

Hungry 5

This aquatic organism passage is located near MP 6.5 on 27N09. The existing corrugated pipe would be replaced with a corrugated metal pipe arch or bottomless arch less than 20 feet wide and approximately 80 feet long on concrete footings. Work would take place approximately 150 feet upstream and downstream of the inlet and, 100 feet on each side of the stream both upstream and downstream.

Figure 4. Hungry 5 outlet showing surrounding area

Taylor 1

This aquatic organism passage is located on 27N45. The existing corrugated pipe would be replaced with a corrugated metal pipe arch or bottomless arch less than 20 feet wide and approximately 50 feet long on concrete footings. Work would take place approximately 100 feet upstream and downstream of the inlet, and 100 feet on each side of the stream both upstream and downstream.

Figure 5. Taylor 1 outlet

Taylor 2

This construction of an earthen or boulder barricade project is located near MP 0.5 on 27N45A. The existing corrugated pipe would be replaced with a corrugated metal pipe arch or bottomless arch less than 20 feet wide and approximately 40 feet long on concrete footings. Work would take place approximately 100 feet upstream and downstream of the inlet, and 100 feet on each side of the stream both upstream and downstream.

Next Steps

The Mt. Hough District Ranger is the Responsible Official.

The project fits within a category of activities that is excluded from review in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement per 36 CFR 220.6(e)(18, 19, and 20) and 36 CFR 220.6(d)(4).

Upon review of the proposal and public comments, our Responsible Official will determine if there are extraordinary circumstances or potential significant environmental effects. At this time, we anticipate that these determinations will be documented in a Decision Memorandum and distributed to interested parties.

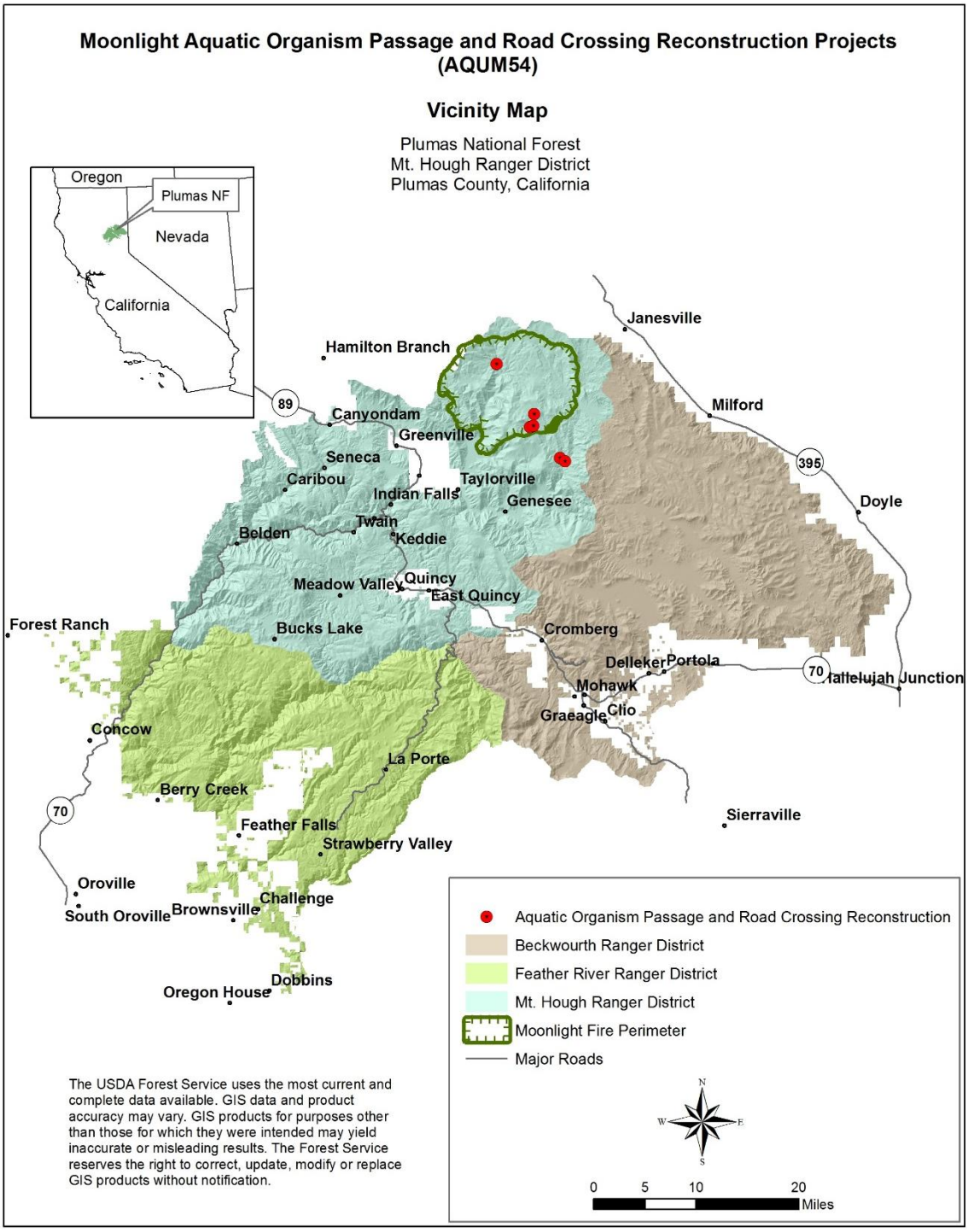

Figure 6. Map showing Moonlight Aquatic Organism Passage Project vicinity

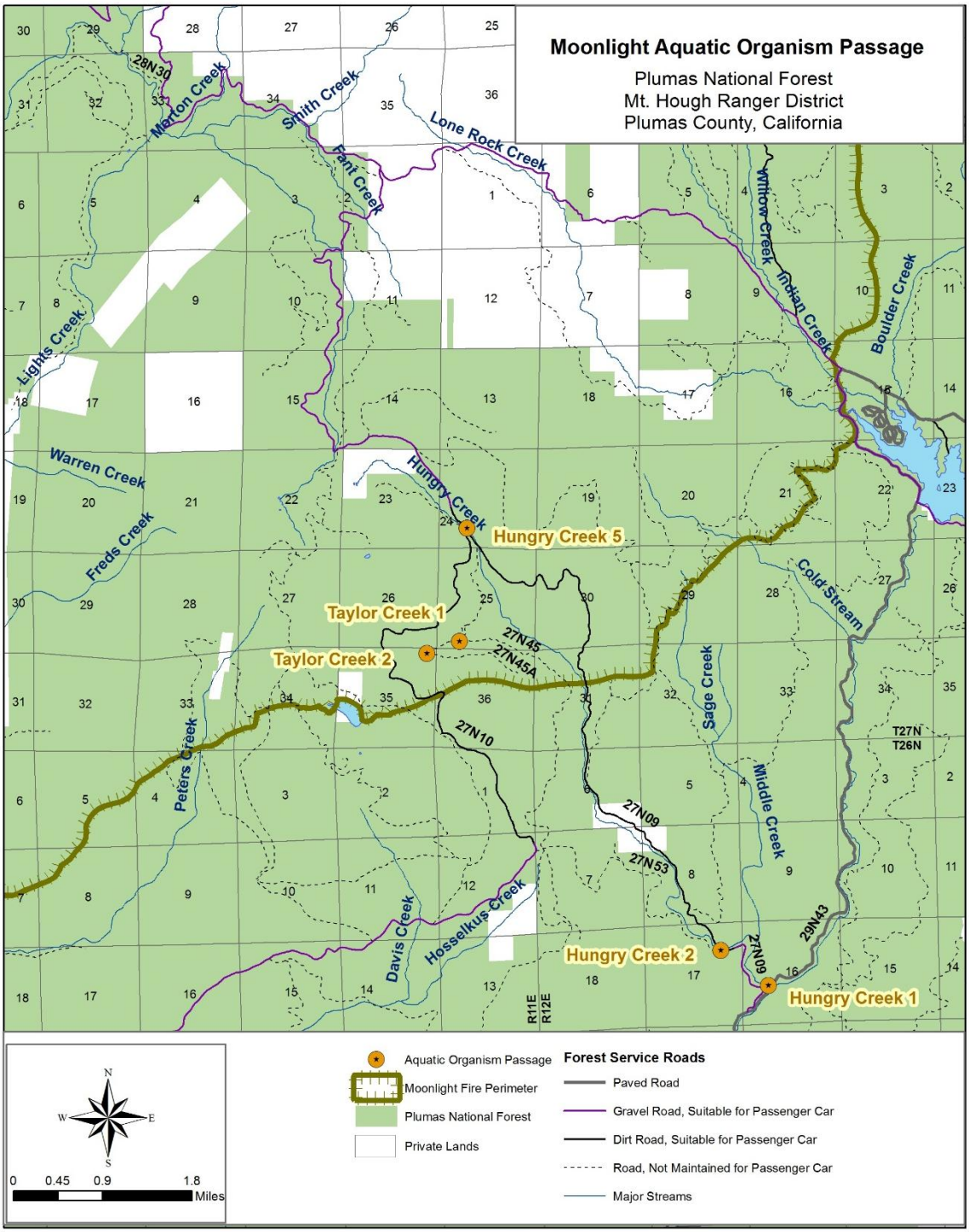

Figure 7. Map showing Moonlight Aquatic Organism Passage Project area